DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 114 SO 032 630

AUTHOR Rice, Susan
TITLE Conflict in Israel and the Middle East: Differing Perspectives. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad Program, 2000 (Egypt and Israel).
SPONS AGENCY Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2000-00-00
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conflict Resolution; Curriculum Development; Foreign Countries; High Schools; Higher Education; *Middle Eastern History; Models; *Perspective Taking; *Political Issues; Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS Fulbright Hays Seminars Abroad Program; *Israel; *Palestinian Israeli Conflict

ABSTRACT

This curriculum project is intended for studying nonviolent conflict resolution at the undergraduate and graduate level, but it could be adapted for high school classes. The project first presents an historical context of Israel to illuminate the present conflict in the Middle East. It then presents a series of vignettes that represent differing viewpoints on the current conflict. Lastly, through the filter of a paradigm about conflict resolution, some ideas are explored for the integration of what seems to be antithetical perspectives about what decisions should be made concerning the future of Israel and Palestine. Contains 16 references. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 451 114

# CONFLICT IN ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST - DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES

**A Curriculum project for the Fulbright-Hayes Summer Seminar, 2000**

**Susan Rice, DSW**
**California State University, Long Beach**
**Department of Social Work**
**1250 Bellflower Boulevard**
**Long Beach, CA 90840-0902**

**Telephone - 562-985-4204**
**FAX - 562-985-5514**
**E-Mail srice@csulb.edu**

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Rosalie Gendimenico

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SO 032 630

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Conflict in Israel and the Middle East - Differing Perspectives

**This curriculum project is intended for students studying non-violent conflict resolution, at the undergraduate and graduate level. However, it could be adapted for use with high school classes as well.**

**Acknowledgments**
I would like to express my thanks to the Fulbright Association, and the staff of the commissions in both Egypt and Israel, who helped make the experience I had so rich and comprehensive. I would especially like to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for Ari and Shoshana Shoval, who shared their knowledge, their passion and their feelings about Israel, in a way that made Israel understandable and "real", even in the brief time period of a three week visit.

**Introduction**
During the past summer (2000), I was fortunate enough to be chosen as a recipient of a Fulbright-Hayes Summer Seminar Scholarship, which allowed me to spend six weeks in Egypt and Israel, along with fourteen other secondary school teachers and college professors. The theme of the seminar was entitled "Egypt and Israel: From Antiquity to Modernity". Within that general theme, each participants had their own area of interest that they intended to explore. As a professor that focuses my work on non-violent conflict resolution, the topic that I selected related to furthering my understanding of the conflict in the Middle East, to understand its historical antecedents, and to learn how solutions were being considered and implemented. My original idea stemmed from the fact that Egypt and Israel have had a signed peace treaty that has been in effect and has been honored since 1979, so my assumption was that people had ideas about what made the treaty work. However, this was actually a naive choice of topics, as I immediately discovered when the seminar began. First of all, the trip to Egypt and the trip to Israel was not a coordinated journey - it was two totally separate experiences. Egypt was our first stop, and in general, people were reluctant to talk about the conflict in the Middle East. I often heard the phrase, "We have a cold peace, which is certainly better than war". Most Egyptians told me that their primary identity was as members of the Arab community, and until the Israeli's and the Palestinians were able to negotiate a settlement, they did not anticipate their relationships with Israel becoming any closer. Very few Egyptians that I met had actually traveled to Israel, nor did they have any intention of doing so.

Therefore, I decided to adjust my topic of exploration, to examine conflicts within each of the two countries. In other words, in Egypt, there were conflicts between the upper class and the lower class, or more specifically between the mainstream culture, and other subcultures, in terms of sharing of resources and perceptions of others. In Israel, there were conflicts between (obviously) Jews and Palestinians, and also between Jews that ranged on a continuum between totally secular, and ultra-orthodox. However, my explorations during the Egyptian portion of the trip were again stymied, because the people that we came into contact with were completely middle and upper class, and they tended to be fairly untalkative about societal problems. When I tried to "push" these discussions, I found that there is a strong value in the Muslim communities that problems should remain private, and should be dealt with privately, within the family, so that as a community, "class" and economic conflicts were not often openly talked about. For

example, some of our speakers acknowledged that there was a homosexual community, but it was so taboo that it was totally underground. When I asked about domestic violence, the perception was that it hardly exists, but when it is found, family members intervene, so that on a societal level, the organizations that we would expect to find in the United States to deal with such problems are few and far between.

Thus, as my trip progressed, I changed focus yet again, and decided to look at the conflicts between Israeli's, and between Israeli's and Palestinians, in terms of feelings and perceptions about how to bring peace to the region. The Fulbright seminar was taking place as the Camp David peace talks of July and August were occurring, and as they finally broke up without success. The mood, however, even when the peace talks did not result in success, was somewhat optimistic about the chances of achieving a peaceful resolution in the near future. When I returned to the United States in August, I actually did do some slide presentations, in which I presented my impressions and ideas, and had a draft of a curriculum project to help students understand the context of the conflict, and ideas about the future. However, as everyone is painfully aware, in the last months, the situation has totally changed, and I think that citizens of the Arab and Jewish world communities are feeling very pessimistic about the prospect of resolving these conflicts right now. Therefore, I have decided to use my experiences as a way to help students see the complexity of this conflict, to help them see how the "different" sides emerged, and how they clash with each other.

First, an historical context of Israel will be presented, to give a backdrop to the present conflict. Then, different viewpoints will be presented, and discussion will focus on exploration of the differing views. Lastly, through the filter of a paradigm about conflict resolution, some possible ideas for integration of what seems to be antithetical perspectives about what decisions should be made related to the future of Israel and Palestine will be explored.

**Historical Context - It must be noted that this is a VERY brief and incomplete history, designed to give students some background about how far back the conflict began, and how varied the players in the conflict have been.**

**Ancient History**

How far back in history should we go to understand the genesis of the problems in Israel today? When in Jerusalem, one of the first places that tourists visit is "Holyland", which offers the viewer a scale model of the city of Jerusalem in Biblical Times. It reminds us that the history of Jews goes back to the destruction of the First Temple, destroyed in 586 BC, and the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in AD 70. (Actually, the history of the Jews goes back even further. When Abraham (born in 1948BC), patriarch of the Jews, was a young man, G-d appeared to him, and told him to leave his birthplace, Ur. Abraham traveled to Canaan (Palestine), and had a son, Isaac. According to the Bible, Abraham was supposed to sacrifice Isaac, but he did not, and sacrificed a ram instead. The very place where Isaac was not sacrificed was Mount Moriah, the spot where the First and Second Temples were subsequently built and destroyed). Since that time, Jews, who were dispersed all over the world, had prayed for a return to Zion (Palestine). However, from the seventh century to the sixteenth century, Zion had been under differing sects of Muslim rule almost without interruption, including the rule of the

Muslim Ottoman Turks, thus making emigration to Palestine possible for only a very small amount of Jews. Still, in 1700, 1500 Jews traveled from Poland, Hungary and Moravia to Palestine (although 500 died along the way). In 1777, 300 Hasidic Jewish families made the journey from Poland to Palestine. In 1812, 400 Jews came from Lithuania. By the middle of the nineteenth century, about 10,000 Jews lived in Palestine (8,000 in Jerusalem). These are tiny, tiny numbers of people - only offered to illustrate the length of the time line demonstrating a connection between Jews and Palestine.

**Quest for a Jewish Homeland**

What was responsible for the larger push to form a Jewish homeland?
Theodore Hertzl, a Hungarian born Jew who lived in Paris and worked as a journalist, was disturbed by the anti-Semitism in France at the time of the Dreyfus case, in the 1890's. The Dreyfus case centered around a Jewish officer who was found guilty of treason, though the charge was later proved to be false. The harsh anti-Semitic tone of the criticism pushed Hertzl to believe that the "solution" was to form a Jewish State. His message had appeal because throughout the world, Jews had run into problems related to being "different". Assimilation (trying to become citizens of the nation where one was living) didn't work. Fighting for a revolutionary socialism that would cure all the evils of the world, including anti-Semitism didn't work. A third solution was seeking a "normal" Jewish life in a Jewish land with a Jewish government. In 1896 Hertzl founded the World Zionist Organization, which proposed a national identity and a national home for the Jews. In 1897, the first Zionist Congress, held in Basle, Switzerland was held, and was attended by 200 delegates. They formulated a program for the future that focused on the main task of Zionism: to "secure for the Jewish people in Palestine a publicly recognized, legally secured homeland". Not everyone agreed with this effort. At the same time, another new Jewish organization - the Bund - the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party - devoted their efforts to demanding equal political and civil rights for Jews. However, the Zionist party grew, and by 1904, they had raised enough money to buy land in Palestine, to establish a Jewish settlement. Though the Turkish government was unwilling to grant the Jews any autonomous region in Palestine, the settlements continued to grow, as thousands of people arrived, trying to escape persecution from Europe.

In 1917, the Turks expelled the Jews from both Jerusalem and Jaffa, and as a result, efforts were made to rouse world opinion in support of the Jews of Palestine. One prominent Jew that took on this task was Aaron Aaronsohn, who had been working for the British during World War I, as they fought the Turks (who had become allies of Germany and Austria-Hungary). Aaronsohn used his connections with Britain, and after a year of negotiations, the Balfour Declaration was issued, which said that Britain viewed "with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object..." When the British conquered the Turks in Jerusalem, the way was clear for the Zionists to begin building their National Jewish Home.

Aside from immigration, a crucial aspect of the future success of Israel had to do with the cultivation of the land. Less than 10 per cent of the land in Palestine was being utilized, and the kibbutz movement flourished, as it focused on communal living, in order to best nurture the land.

**Antecedents of the Arab-Jewish Conflicts**

The Balfour Declaration had included a phrase that nothing should be done with regard to establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine that would be a detriment to other communities in Palestine. The largest of these other communities were Arabs (500,000, as compared to 65,000 Jews). In 1920, there were violent Arab protests against further Jewish immigration. When attempts were made to protect the Jews from attack, the defenders were arrested for carrying arms, which motivated the establishment of the Haganah - a defense organization clandestinely operating without the approval of the British government. In many ways, Arab and Jewish nationalism were developing along parallel paths - fostering their language as one of the official languages of the land, and establishing school systems that bred nationalism. Further riots, however, divided Zionists between those who wanted to compromise and live with Arabs, and those who wanted to pursue military confrontation as the only option by which a Jewish homeland could be established.

**World War II and the role of Great Britain in the future of Palestine (Israel)**

Although in the 1920's, Britain had been supportive of Jewish immigration to Palestine which would eventually lead to a Jewish majority, their support lessened in the face of continual hostility to Jewish immigration from Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen. Their 1939 White Paper suggested that Jewish immigration be so limited that the attainment of a Jewish majority would be impossible. At the same time, however, when the Germans invaded Poland, and became enemies of Britain, Jews of Palestine fought with Britain against Hitler, though they continued to fight for unlimited immigration, both legal and illicit. In 1940, two ships, with 1,771 illegal immigrants on board reached Haifa, and were not allowed to land. The Haganah, hoping to prevent the deportation of the passengers, planted explosives to immobilize the ship, but miscalculated and sank one of the ships, drowning more than 250 refugees. The rest were allowed to remain in Haifa, but British authorities halted immigration for months. Later in the war, at Winston Churchhill's urging, British policy again changed, and enabled any refugees who could get out of Nazi-dominated Europe, to stay in Palestine, regardless of the legal quotas. However, at the end of the war, Britain again attempted to enforce the immigration quotas, which led to bitterness between the Jews in Palestine and the British government.

The Haganah accelerated illegal immigration, and the British government accelerated efforts to control the Jews in Palestine. Yet another dissident military group, the Irgun (founded in 1931) was active, trying to fight the British in Palestine, and to seize overall power, and using violent tactics. During 1947, violence increased, and at the same time, the Arab position that any kind of Jewish homeland was unacceptable, became more vocally presented. An additional pressure for the British was the knowledge that oil resources in the Middle East were becoming a larger portion of the world's supply, and that the Arab opposition to a Jewish homeland could hurt access to oil. Britain, at this point, decided to turn the issue over to the United Nations.

The United Nations presented a proposal that created two separate and independent States, one Arab and one Jewish, with the city of Jerusalem as a "corpus separatum" under international trusteeship. The Jewish state would contain 498,000 Jews and 407,000 Arabs, and the Arab State would contain 725,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews. Jerusalem would contain 105,000 Arabs and 100,000 Jews. The Jewish Agency, accepted the proposal, although they felt that it was a

sacrifice, as a quarter of the Jews of Palestine would live outside the areas of Jewish statehood. They also realized that they might, eventually, need to fight to have the partition upheld. The Arab Higher Committee rejected the proposal. From the day of the partition, however, "informal" war had started - there were attacks on Jews by Arab terrorists, and attacks on Arabs by the Haganah.

**Establishment of the State of Israel**

In April, 1948, the conflict intensified as Arabs and Jews fought for control of the road to Jerusalem. In Tiberias, and then in Haifa, the Haganah forces defeated the Arab forces, and declared victory. Other cities followed, and the leader of the forces, David Ben-Gurion, then had to make a decision as to whether or not to unilaterally declare statehood. The United States was calling for a three month cease fire, to allow the United Nations to take control of the country until a political solution acceptable to both sides could be worked out. The Jewish Agency refused, and on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was born. It is important to note (in light of today's conflicts) that Jerusalem, at this point, was potentially under United Nations control. However, at a series of debates in the General Assembly, the Arab nations rejected the proposal that would allow Jerusalem to be an international city, and the United Nations lost control. Now, it would be a direct struggle for power between the Jews and the Arabs. Four weeks of war, followed by a truce, followed by more war, followed by another truce eventually led to a cease fire, and a temporary armistice (the first) in which Egypt and Israel, in February, 1949, agreed to facilitate a transition to permanent peace.

**1967 Six Day War and the Yom Kippur, October 1973 War**

Conflict was somewhat muted in the next decades, but never ceased. In 1967, President Nasser, of Egypt, moved troops into the Sinai (and asked the United Nations to withdraw its forces) from which Israel had withdrawn nine years earlier, and which had been demilitarized as security for Israel after her withdrawal. The UN did withdraw, beginning an internal Israeli debate as to whether to take pre-emptive military action against Egypt or not. They DID take military action on June 4, 1967, and in a surprise attack, put 400 Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian aircraft out of action. Six days later, the war was "over", and Israel was in control of thousands of Palestinian Arabs. One of the difficult questions that would remain for the next 33 years was whether Jews could, or should, remain an occupying power, ruling over Arab people and land. In November, 1967, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 242, which called for withdrawal by Israel of occupied territories acquired as a result of the Six-Day War. Whether this meant "all" or some of the territories, became a point of contention. However, the second part of that resolution called for an "end to belligerency and a respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty and political independence of every state in the area". This part of the resolution applied to Arab States as well as Israel, and they had, thus far, (and still have, at the present time) refused to accede to this part of the resolution.

In 1973, on Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar, Egyptian and Syrian forces simultaneously attacked Israel. This war lasted three weeks, and when it was over, a cease fire, hopefully leading to a durable peace, was reached, though at a heavy cost. For Israeli's, they had seen father's and son's fight side by side, and had become divided as to whether or not war was the way to peace. In the next years, the divisions within Israel's political parties would

intensify.

**Internal Conflicts Within Israel and Palestine**

Until the 1973 war, Israeli's were fairly united behind the idea of creating a Jewish homeland. After that time, however, the way to securing that homeland, and the nature of the homeland itself, became subjects of controversy for members of Israeli society.

In 1982, Menachem Begin's government, after heated discussion in the Knesset (Israel's governmental body), bowed to pressure from the National Religious Party and agreed to discontinue all El Al flights on the Sabbath. Many representatives of the Knesset were furious, and felt that it was a turning point in the balance between the secular and religious sections of Israeli society. Secular Israel was being eroded, despite it's founders determination to not follow religious law in the day to day working of a modern State. However, the "victory" of the religious parties gave them impetus to continue to assert their political power.

A second internal conflict had to do with the growing number of new settlements on the West Bank. When, in 1982, Ariel Sharon (who headed the Likud - a right-wing party) gave approval for even more settlements, members of Peace Now (the burgeoning peace movement in Israel) tried to demonstrate near Hebron. Israeli troops blocked their way, and then used tear gas to force them to disperse. Also at this time, members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) renewed attacks on Israeli officials, including the Israeli Ambassador, Schlomo Argov. He recovered (though remained paralyzed), but this event (some say) gave Sharon (then, the Minister of Defence) the determination to invade Lebanon. What he said to the Cabinet was that this operation would be localized, and would be for the purpose of securing peace in Galilee, where the PLO had been systematically shelling residents. His actions, however, went far beyond those limited objectives, and began yet another period of active war engagement in the Middle East. Also to be noted, however, is that this war generated a great deal of conflict within Israeli society, as many considered it to be an "unnecessary war". The Israeli writer Amoz Oz, reflecting on the name given to this operation - Operation Peace for Galilee - said, "Wherever war is called peace, where oppression and persecution are referred to as security, and assassination is called liberation, the defilement of the language precedes and prepares for the defilement of life and dignity. In the end, the state, the regime, the class or the idea remain intact where human life is shattered".

And, a few months later, when a peace treaty was about to be signed, there was an ambush by Christian Phalangist (allies of Israel), in which 500 Muslims were slaughtered. Although Israeli troops did not participate in the killings, Israeli society was horrified, and outraged. Four hundred thousand people (10% of the population of Israel) participated in the largest mass demonstration ever seen in Israel, and Ariel Sharon was severely criticized. Though Sharon had no actual role in this tragic event, his critics felt that he should have known about it in advance, and have been able to stop it.

The dispute between Israeli's about whether new settlements should be encouraged also became more divisive as the settler population grew to 100,000 people, against the wishes of the Labour opposition who felt that this policy would make it harder and harder for Jews and Arabs to

separate amicably. Also, as time went by, resentment deepened from people in the occupied territory, and the settlers' attitudes became more racist, as they grew up and found it "normal" that the Palestinians were "subject" people. Those Israeli's who were against a permanent occupation became more and more uncomfortable with the practices and attitudes of the settlers.

Since most of Israeli's citizens were immigrants (in 1985, only 18.5% of Israeli Jews were native born), there were also divisions between customs and attitudes of immigrants from different countries. One of the major divides was between Ashkenzi Jews (north European and North American), and Sephardi Jews (North Africa, Iraq, Persia and the Balkans). The Ashkenazis came from cultures that respected technological progress and education to a greater degree than the Sephardi Jews who came from Islamic cultures. These divisions manifested in later years in one group (the Ashkenazis) having more education, more wealth, and more power, and became yet another point of divisiveness within Israeli citizens.

The "intifada" grew out of a movement from Arabs who were in the Gaza Strip and West Bank becoming increasingly frustrated with occupation. Villagers sought to block the entry of Israeli soldiers, and schoolchildren were encouraged to throw stones. By the 1980's, the children and grandchildren of the original refugees of 1948, who had grown up in camps, were fighting for their own national identity. There were numerous examples of Israeli soldiers treating people more harshly than necessary to contain violence, and it led to more division between Israeli's. In 1987, the Security Council of the United Nations debated and passed a resolution denouncing Israeli violence in the occupied territories, but Israel continued to uphold their rule of law. Meanwhile, the Arab states were using this as a means to encourage their own collective action, to intensify world pressure. A more extremist party, Hamas, founded in 1988, rejected the legitimacy of the PLO as the sole leader of the Palestinian people. They also rejected the idea of permanent compromise, and felt that a holy war (jihad) needed to be fought not only against Israel, but also against elements of Palestinian society who had collaborated with Israel.

The Knesset (the Israeli configuration of our Congress) operates on a system of proportional representation. Therefore, the members of the Knesset, by political party, represent the number of votes they receive in a popular election. In the 1988 elections, the Likud remained the largest single party in the Knesset, but did not have a majority, so they turned to the religious right-wing parties to build a coalition. The largest of the religious parties was Shas, who won six seats. Shas represented the Sephardi Orthodox population, who were committed to an enhancement of religious observance, and who were against compromise and negotiation with the Palestinians. The Labor Party lost five seats, and was excluded from the new national unity government because of what Likud had called their "dovish" tendencies. The struggle that these parties represented mimicked the struggle between the forces of occupation and those of individual sovereignty - which interests were paramount?

Though the intifada continued, the bloodshed continued, and the internal conflict continued, efforts were made to devise a way to have talks about peace. The Madrid conference, in October, 1991, allowed representatives of the Israelis and Arabs to talk directly to each other for the first time since 1948. Yitzhak Rabin, who had become Prime Minister of the new Labour-led coalition was committed to peace talks, and to ending financing of the Jewish settlements in the

occupied territories, and to absorb the growing numbers of Russian immigrants who been coming steadily to Israel in the past years. He believed that peace was both necessary and possible. However, the revival of the peace process had created an intensification of the activities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the two Muslim groups most opposed to any compromise with Israel. It also intensified
resistance efforts of the religious right in Israel, who also wanted no part of compromise. Yet, the peace process had begun, and in 1993, the world saw Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shaking hands on the White House lawn, symbolizing the new reality - that Israel and the PLO were recognizing each other as legitimate entities. Rabin's comment was "One does not make peace with one's friends. One makes peace with one's enemies".

During the next months, a right wing Jewish gunman opened fire inside the main mosque in Hebron, and killed 29 Arab worshipers, and two suicide bombers, who were members of Hamas, killed 14 Jews. Still, Rabin pursued a signing of a peace accord, which did occur in May, 1994. The agreement gave the Palestinian Authority (headed by Arafat) legislative, executive, and judicial powers and responsibilities, including its own armed police force, and full control over internal security, education, health and welfare. There seemed to be a momentum towards peace, as Rabin and King Hussein of Jordan signed a declaration ending war. Immediately afterwards, a suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in one of the settlements in Gaza, killing 22 Jews. The leader of the opposition party in Israel (Benjamin Netanyahu) denounced Rabin's policies, saying that Arafat clearly was not interested in peace. As Arafat and Rabin continued to negotiate, there were more suicide bombings, and yet they both signed an agreement in September, 1995 (Oslo II) which provided a timetable to extend self-rule to the West Bank. The dissent within Israeli political parties intensified even more, and Rabin was called a traitor and a murderer for continuing to negotiate. However, the agreement passed the Knesset by a small margin. A month later, Rabin was assassinated by a religious student, a Jew, who considered the peace process a betrayal of Jewish values. In some sense, this atrocity galvanized the groups in Israel wanting peace, but further suicide bombings led to the election of Netanyahu (though by a narrow margin) over Peres, who would have continued Rabin's policies.

As the 49th anniversary of the creation of Israel neared, the ultra-orthodox groups in Israel were also heightening their protests, and introduced a bill that would recognize as true conversions to Judaism inside Israel only those that were carried out by Orthodox rabbis. The bill passed its first reading, but the protests had been so strong that the government put a freeze on the bill to find a compromise. When sirens sounded on May 11, (Memorial Day), two moments of silence were called for to pay respects to all those Israelis who had fallen victims to terrorist attacks, but the ultra-orthodox refused to participate, further sharpening the schism within Israel. Although the Ultra-orthodox are a very small percentage of Israeli citizens, they are extremely vocal, and wield a disproportionate amount of power.

Most recently, Ehud Barak, the Labour Party's newly elected leader has lost his ability to have enough support to govern, the Peace talks broke down completely in August, 2000, and there is again increasing violence in the streets. How do we make sense of possible "solutions" when the divisions are so deep and so wide?

**Differing Perspectives:**
Hopefully, the preceding history has given some idea of the events that have led up to the present state of affairs. The following vignettes have been culled from books, newspapers and the Internet. They are meant to be representative of the vast array of opinions and perceptions about the conflicts going on today; to help students explore the complexity of the Middle Eastern conflict, and to eventually be discussed in terms of possible solutions.

**Vignette A**
The Palestinian perspective about escalating violence starts from the presumption that they are victims. The overwhelming majority of people killed in the last few months of the year 2000 have been Palestinians, and they feel that they are routinely dehumanized and devalued by the way these deaths have been reported. As of October 27, 122 Palestinians and four Israelis had been killed - this is far more than an overwhelming majority. Moreover, what makes the Palestinians "terrorists" as opposed to "freedom fighters"? What makes their actions called "waves of violence" instead of "resistance to an occupying power"? What makes the news coverage differ so, from reporting the killing of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah, with compassionate details about the funeral and the soldier's daily life that made viewers see him as a man as well as a soldier, compared to the cursory coverage of the deaths of Palestinian victims, who seemed to all have been "caught in the crossfire?
(Palestine Report, November 1, 2000)

**Vignette B**
The following excerpts are from conversation between an American-born Israeli (I), and a Palestinian (P) who have worked together for 3 years in a restaurant in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem. They have a history of supporting each other through one's divorce, and the death of the other's mother. The boss leaves blank signed checks for the worker, because the level of trust is high. And yet, in the wave of violence that has exploded in the last few months, their dreams of coexistence have unraveled.

P: Why can't the Israelis control rock-throwing Palestinian crowds without shooting?
I: The first thought I have is, What Israeli would go face the Arabs without a gun? However, I contemplate whether the cycle of violence could have been prevented if in the very beginning the Jerusalem police had used milder riot control techniques – as they would at Jewish demonstrations.

I: Why are Palestinians putting children in the midst of clashes to be killed?
P: The way it stands in the Arab street, it's jihad now, or holy war. In jihad situation, the rules are off. Kids don't ask their father and wives don't need the permission of their husband. Listen, we have direct orders from God. We are fighting for our freedom.

(New York Times, October 29, 2000)

**Vignette C**
The following thoughts are excerpts from the writings of an Arab-American journalist, Joseph Farah, who writes for an Internet-based conservative paper, WorldNet Daily.

(This is a fairly unusual perspective, from an Arab-American's viewpoint)

If you believe what you read in most news sources, Palestinians want a homeland and Muslims want control over sites they consider holy. Simple, right? Well, isn't it interesting that prior to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, there was no serious movement for a Palestinian homeland? Well, you might say that was before the Israelis seized the West Bank and Old Jerusalem. But, Israel didn't capture these territories from Yasser Arafat. They captured them from Jordan's King Hussein. I can't help but wonder why all these Palestinians suddenly discovered their national identity after Israel won the war.

The truth is that Palestine is no more real than Never-Never Land. Palestine has never existed as an autonomous entity. It was ruled by Rome, by Islamic and Christian crusaders, by the Ottoman Empire, and briefly, by the British after World War I. There is no language known as Palestinian. There is no distinct Palestinian culture. Palestinians are Arabs. Keep in mind that the Arabs control 99.9 % of the Middle East lands. Israel represents one-tenth of 1 % of the landmass. But that's too much for the Arabs. They want it all. That is ultimately what the fighting in Israel is about today. Greed. Pride. Envy. No matter how many land concessions the Israelis make, it will never be enough.

So, what's the solution? If there is one, it needs to begin with truth. Pretending will only lead to more chaos. Treating a 5,000 year old birthright, backed by overwhelming historical and archaeological evidence equally with illegitimate claims, wishes and wants gives diplomacy and peacekeeping a bad name.

**Vignette D**

The following thoughts are excerpts from the interviews with Yigal Amir who killed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in November, 1995

"There can't be peace here. The Arabs are our antithesis in every way. We can't live peacefully with them. For three years Rabin's government has imposed their outlook in a way that's created new concepts. I mean, peace has received a new meaning. The word 'peace' is, to me, first of all peace within the nation. You must love your own people before you can love others. The concept of peace has been turned into a destructive instrument with which anything can be done. I mean, you can kill people, abandon people to their fate, close Jews into ghettos and surround them with Arabs, give guns to the Palestinian Police, establish a Palestinian army, and say this is for the sake of peace. You can release Hamas terrorists from prison, free murderers with blood on their hands, and everything in the framework of peace.

I pulled the trigger, because in the long run, if the peace process continued, the whole country would be ruined. I thought about this for two years, and I calculated the possibilities and the risks. If I hadn't done it, I would feel much worse. My deed will be understood in the future. I saved the people of Israel from destruction."

**Vignette E**

Seeds of Peace is a program that was designed to bring together Israeli and Palestinian youths, to learn from each other, to learn to talk to and with each other, and most importantly, not to hate each other.

You are entitled to your opinion, and just as you consider Barak cowardly and inhuman, I consider Arafat cowardly and inhuman. I don't want any peace treaties signed with him. BUT I have no one else to sign them with, so I would take the only choice I have....It's better than war....

**Vignette F**
From a conversation between two friends in the United States, one Jewish(J) and one Arab(A), while discussing the current situation (November, 2000)

A: So, what would you do if all of the Arab States declared war on Israel.
J: I would hope that it would not come to that but as a Jew, I am obligated to defend the state of Israel against total destruction.

A: You want to go to Israel and kill some Arabs?
J: That's not what I said
A: Yes it is
J: No it's not
A: Yes it is
J: You're just as ignorant as Sharon.
A: I'm ending our friendship. I hope you burn in hell with the rest of the Jews in the world.

After reflection, J (who is a student in a class focusing on non-violence) had the following thoughts:
A is Palestinian and still has family in East Jerusalem. I remember him telling me stories of having to take his Grandmother to visit and how she used to cry when she saw what used to be her home. He told me of how his grandfather was a general in the Palestinian/Jordanian army, and how he was killed in the '67 way, and how his uncle was imprisoned for five years in Israel. I could see how he felt betrayed by what he thought I said, and how angry he must have been given the information I know about the Palestinian people and his families situation. I wished that I could have been more concerned about being his friend, rather than about saving face for myself. I should have acknowledged his anger not at me but at the events in the Middle East. I should have apologized for the pain he was feeling. I should have tried to have seen it through his eyes.

(Personal Conversation, Michael Petri, 2000)

**Vignette G**
Paraphrased thoughts from a conversation with an Israeli Arab in the summer of 2000.

"I am offended that the Israeli's don't let me serve in the army, don't treat me as an Israeli citizen with full rights. Sure I can vote, and my identity papers say that I am Israeli, but by being denied the opportunity to serve in the Army, I am prevented from all kinds of job opportunities and

promotions, because a prerequisite to them is military service. My loyalty is to the state of Israel, and they don't think that's possible because I am an Arab. How is this different from the way that the United States treated their Japanese-American citizens, when they rounded them up and put them in camps, just because they were of Japanese origin. These were people who were American. Well, I am Israeli."

**Vignette H**
From a Jewish Israeli citizen who is angry at the media coverage of the current conflicts in Israel:

"Anti-semitism is real - and is being played out in the guise of anti-Israeli sentiment in the world at large. Was Ariel Sharon's ascent to the Temple Mount a smart thing to do in the current situation? No. Was his ascent to the Mount a sufficient "provocation" to trigger off the violence we have seen since that Friday? Also no. He went unarmed to visit a Jewish holy site that all agree is an act allowed to all Jews. The Thursday before Sharon's visit, an Israeli Border Patrol soldier was murdered by a double roadside bomb. Are the Palestinian people so out of control that any act to which they object may produce such violence as the only response? How then are we to trust any peace agreement? How then are we to trust Palestinian sovereignty in the Old City or to trust them as our peaceful neighbors? Why is it that the world ignores the fact that the only time in history that there has been unlimited access to all religions to their holy sites in the Old City has been since the 1967 re-capture of the Old City by Israel?

Here is what one of the attacks looks like. Thousands (no exaggeration) of Palestinians, mostly young men and children begin to storm an Israeli outpost which protects an Israeli village. Behind this mob, hiding behind buildings are Palestinian police and civilians with automatic weapons who fire on the outpost. The soldiers can either ignore these "mere rock throwers" until they physically overrun their outpost and attach what is beyond (unarmed Israelis) or selectively fire to try to stop the surging crowd from reaching the village they are protecting. As the world decries the 200+ deaths, no one stops to ask how many would actually be dead if Israeli forces were actually doing what they are accused of - shooting indiscriminately into these crowds with their automatic weapons. The media reports this as Israeli aggression. Yes, children are being killed. But I ask you, what kind of parent allows, and in many cases encourages, their child to go to the front lines of what is basically a war to throw stones at armed troops? This is NOT civil disobedience or demonstration. This is mass mob rioting with all the dangers that it entails. The Palestinians send their children to be slaughtered and then cynically use this in the court of world opinion.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY**
After reading the different vignettes, and eliciting class opinion about what major issues seem to be involved in the rhetoric, a summary of some of the major issues and questions in the Mid-East conflict will be listed. These include:

1. What, ideally, are the nature of Palestinian rights, and what are ways to protect them. In other words, are the Palestinians a "subject people", are they living in their homeland, should they be forced to leave, and/or under what conditions should they stay?

2. Can a Palestinian State co-exist with Israel, or will the existence of a Palestinian state always be a threat to Israel?
3. Should Israel be negotiating with the PLO while terrorist activities continue?

4. What are possible ways to achieve all of the necessary elements of any comprehensive peace plan? Usually, the necessary elements are considered to be:
a. A cessation of all acts of violence by all parties
b. Recognition by the Arab states and by the Palestinian Arabs of the state of Israel with defined and recognized borders, and recognition by Israel of the right of national self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs and of their right to select their own representatives and to establish a sovereign state.
c. Agreement on an international mode of enforcement to secure the boundaries and borders agreed upon.
d. Provisions for solutions to the problems of refugees and displaced persons (Palestinian Arab, Jewish, and other), dating from 1948, and including questions related to compensation and rights of return.
e. Agreement on the future status of Jerusalem, recognizing that it is a focus of the deepest religious inspiration and attachment of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

**Getting To Peace**
Then, using a paradigm presented by William Ury, in his latest work which examines the issue of getting to peace in contexts ranging from the family to the world, students will explore possible roads to solution. Ury's model, briefly presented here, envisions a set of roles to be played by a "third side" that if enacted vigilantly, can provide a "road map" to peace. He points to societies that have success in managing conflict and avoiding escalation, such as the Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert in Africa. Their "secret" is the 'vigilant, active, and constructive involvement of the surrounding members of the community" in regards to any conflict that does not appear to be resolvable by the principal's involved. That "third side" has the ability to help find a perspective of common ground, whereas the disputants in any conflict usually see only their two opposing sides. The "third side" point of view strives for a resolution that satisfies the legitimate needs of the involve parties AND at the same time meets the needs of the wider community (in this case, the world).

Ury suggests that there are three major opportunities to channel a conflict - to prevent, by addressing latent questions, to resolve, by paying attention to overt conflicts, and to contain escalating power struggles . In the middle East, the conflict is at the second and third levels. However, it is useful to delineate the roles that a conflict resolution process would contain at each of the levels, in order to help us think about long term solutions.

To PREVENT conflict, one can be a provider, a teacher, or a bridge-builder. The provider enables people to meet their needs (and the reason the conflict escalates is because individual needs are frustrated). The teacher offers skills to handle conflicts, including delegitimizing violence, and teaching tolerance and joint problem-solving philosophies. The bridge-builder forges relationships across lines of conflict, by creating ties across boundaries, developing joint projects, and fostering genuine dialogue.

To RESOLVE conflict, one can be a mediator, an arbiter, an equalizer, or a healer. The mediator helps to reconcile conflicting interests, by bringing the parties to the table (President Clinton often played this role), facilitating communication, and helping in the search for solution. The arbiter determines disputed rights, as a way to replace destructive conflict, promote justice, and encourage negotiation. The equalizer serves as a democratizing power, by helping to ring the more powerful side to the table, building a collaborative democracy, and supporting nonviolent action. The healer tries to repair injured relationships by creating the right climate, listening and acknowledging, encouraging each side to apologize for their wrongs, and encouraging reconciliation.

To CONTAIN conflict, one can be a witness, a referee, or a peacekeeper. As a witness, one pays attention to escalation, speaks out, and asks for assistance. As a referee, one sets limits to fighting, establishes rules for fair fighting, and helps to strengthen defenses nondefensively. As a peacekeeper, one provides protection by enforcing peace, and trying to preempt violence before it starts.

**ENDING NOTE:**

It needs to be recognized that this is merely a paradigm to help understand possible solutions. It would be presumptuous to think that applying this paradigm would "solve" the incredibly complex issues in Israel today. However, without being too apologetic, this project is offered as a way to help students THINK about the problem in a way that leaves them with hope, of being peacekeepers in the world. This, to me, seems to be a very appropriate goal for students in a class that focuses on non-violent conflict resolution.

**References**

Artz, D. 1997. Refugees Into Citizens: Palestinians and the End of the Arab-Israeli Conflict. New York: Council on Foreign Relations

Bar-On, M. 1996. In Pursuit of peace: A History of the Israeli Peace Movement. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Ezrachi, Y. 1997. Rubber Bullets: Power and Conscience in Modern Israel. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Gilbert, M. 1998. Israel: A History. New York: William Morrow and Company.

Goldberg, D. 1996. To The Promised Land: A History of Zionist Thought from Its Origins to the Modern State of Israel. London: Penguin Books.

Goldman, R. 1990. From Warfare to Party Politics: The Critical Transition to Civilian Control. New York: Syracuse University Press.

Gribetz, J., Greenstein, E., and Stein, R. 1993. The timetables of Jewish history: A chronology

of the most important people and events in Jewish History. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Grossman, D. 1988. The Yellow Wind (Translated from Hebrew by Haim Watzman). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Karpin, M. and Friedman, I. 1998. Murder in the name of God: The plot to kill Yitzhak Rabin. New York: Henry Holt and Company

Katz, S.1973. Battleground: Fact and Fantasy in Palestine. New York: Bantam Books

Leone, B. 1985. The Middle East: Opposing Viewpoints. Minnesota: Greenhaven Press.

Minow, M. 2000. Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and mass Violence. Boston: Beacon Press.

Oz, A. 1994. Israel, Palestine and Peace, Essays. New York: Vintage.

Peres, S. 1995. Battling for peace: Memoirs. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Shindler, C. 1991. Ploughshares into Swords? Israelis and Jews in the shadow of the Intifada. London: I.B. Tauris.

Ury, W. 1999. Getting to Peace: Transforming Conflict at home, at work, and in the world. New York: Viking.